

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Original) A method for ensuring the reliability of technical components, especially of internal combustion engines and the parts thereof, by means of a test program, comprising the following steps:
 - a) selection of at least one critical component and at least one critical damage mode;
 - b) definition of a reliability goal for each critical component;
 - c) selection of at least one test procedure for each critical component;
 - d) allocation of a test duration and/or test length for each test procedure;
 - e) allocation of acceleration factors in connection with the individual components and test procedures;
 - f) determination of an equivalent test duration and/or test length for the critical component and the respective test by means of acceleration factors and test duration or test length;
 - g) calculation of the verifiable reliability for the critical component on the basis of the chosen test procedure.
2. (Currently Amended) A method especially according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the deterioration models are prepared for

the critical components and damaging modes, and the acceleration factors are prepared on the basis of the deterioration models.

3. (Currently Amended) A method especially according to claim 2, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the preparation of the damage models contains the step of comparing the duration until the occurrence of a damaging in practical use with the duration until the occurrence of the same damaging in the test.

4. (Currently Amended) A method especially according to ~~one of the claims 1 to 3,~~ claim 1, ~~characterized~~ wherein by the following steps:

- h) comparison of the verifiable reliability with the reliability goal;
- i) modification of the test program when verifiable reliability departs from the reliability goal and the departure is larger than a predefined tolerance quantity.

5. (Currently Amended) A method especially according to claim 4, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein at least one test procedure is modified when the verifiable reliability lies beneath the reliability goal.

6. (Currently Amended) A method especially according to claim 4 ~~or 5,~~ ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the steps c) through i) are repeated until the verifiable reliability corresponds at least to the reliability goal.

7. (Currently Amended) A method especially according to ~~one of the claims 1 to 6~~ claim 1, with a service life goal being predefined for the critical component, characterized by the following steps:

j) comparison of the equivalent test duration and/or test length with the service life goal;

k) modification of the test program when verifiable equivalent test duration and/or test length departs from the service life goal and the departure is larger than a predefined tolerance quantity.

8. (Currently Amended) A method especially according to claim 7, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein at least one test procedure is modified when the equivalent test duration and/or test length lies beneath the service life goal.

9. (Currently Amended) A method especially according to claim 7 ~~or 8~~, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein at least the steps c) to g), j) and k) are repeated until the equivalent test duration and/or test length corresponds at least to the service life goal.

10. (Currently Amended) A method especially according to ~~one of the claims 1 to 9~~, ~~characterized in that~~ claim 1, wherein the results of the individual tests are represented as a load matrix for the individual components or are saved to a database.